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Period 2

AP Language

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I. We, as a general public, wonder around aimlessly, naive and clueless to the world around us. We focus on all the wrong things, such as the antics of Michael Jackson, disappearance of a spoiled high school student spring breaking in Aruba, or whether O.J. Simpson is innocent or guilty. Important things like our political leaders or our future does not seem to matter to us. We have come to a point where we are like sheep with different manipulators herding us in the direction of their choice. In “The Assault On Reason” by Al Gore, it is shown that the public does not use reason when making decisions.

II. The author of this book is Albert Gore Jr. He was born on March 31, 1948 in Washington D.C., but his hometown was Carthage, Tennessee. After his birth, his father Albert Gore Sr. served four more years in the House of Representatives and won three consecutive terms as senator. For this reason, Al Gore grew up in the heart of Washington D.C. When Gore turned 18, he enrolled into Harvard University. In 1969, he graduated cum laude with a B.A. in government. Because he was a huge anti-war activist, he considered moving to Canada to avoid the Vietnam war when he was drafted for service in the military. However, he eventually enlisted so as not to hurt his father’s odds for serving another term for the Senate. Gore served as a reporter for six months while serving in Vietnam. When he returned home, he was offered a job as a reporter where he wrote about city politics. In 1974, he spontaneously decided to enroll at Vanderbilt University of Law School to study law. Two years later however, in 1976, he decided to run for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives thus causing him to walk away without any degrees. Using his fathers ready-made political base, he ran and won four terms in a row. He stood out among the others because he applied his journalist skills to his speeches and arguments. He became a member of the senate in 1984, and then ran for president in 1988. After losing, he was chosen to be Clinton’s Vice President in 1992. He ran for President a second time but lost to George W. Bush. His focus then shifted to informing the public about pressing issues such as global warming and corruption in government.

Because of his journalistic background, Gore argues his points effectively and interestingly. He has the experience to speak about pressing issues because as a child the government was his playground. However, he becomes a little bias when addressing issues about Bush. He seems to harbor deep hatred for Bush and never has anything good to say about him. His infinite knowledge of government shows in his writing as well when he talks about how things are run. He does seem to have a motive. That motive is to educate people about the corruption that Bush has created in our country and to help us see all the horrible things Bush has done. Gore makes the reader stand up and take notice. He makes us question why we don’t do anything about the deceitful deeds Bush has done.

III. The Assault on Reason is meant to open the public’s eyes, to step back and look at how naive we are as a public. This book’s main point is that the public does not use reason or logic when making decisions. It starts by talking about how the community gets their information. He claims that today’s flow of information is largely in one direction.  “Individuals receive, but they cannot send. They absorb, but they cannot share. They hear, but they cannot speak. They see constant motion, but they do not move themselves. The ‘well-informed citizenry’ is in danger of becoming the ‘well assumed audience.’” (Gore) In this age, television is now they most accessible form of information in history. Television’s previous competition was writing, which was a form of two way communication. If the reader needed to communicate ideas or opinions on a topic or issue at hand, they could confess it. With television, stations and networks cannot be reached by an individual and they are uninterested in what the public has to say. News, which is a large and important form of informing the community, is now based solely on what makes a profit. “The purpose of television news now seems primarily to be to ‘glue eyeballs to the screen’ in order to build ratings and sell advertising” (Gore). This poses as a problem because when people are not informed, they cannot hold government accountable when it is incompetent or corrupt. One of the main reasons that ideas are dominated by television is because of the vivid images individuals witness when they are watching it. When reading an article or other written words, the imagination and words that the reader absorbs is responsible for painting a picture in their head. But with television, the person or network that is in control of the station or show can convey anything they want to the viewer. This can manipulate the viewer into thinking what the network wants them to think or see. This can lead to many problems.

Television results in one of the main reasons why society does not use reason when making important decisions. This reason is fear. “Reason may sometimes dissipate fear, but fear frequently shuts down reason.” (Gore) A common way that political leaders or other people of power control the public is by creating a fear to herd the public a certain way so that they don’t focus on what really matters. Physiologists have found that people can conceptualize imaginary threats just as powerfully as real threats. For example, research shows that when people tell traumatic events, the listener produces physical and emotional responses that link them to victims. This research shows that television can then create false memories that are just as powerful as real ones just by watching T.V. This was recently used against the public when the former president, George W. Bush, stood in front of the nation and told them to imagine a terrorist attack with a nuclear weapon. He even used words like “mushroom cloud”. This initiated a fear in us because of the horrors of 9/11 and even World War II. Many of the younger generations were not alive to experience World War II, but because of the images they have seen in movies and documentaries they are frightened by words like “mushroom clouds” (Zimmerman). This in turn will make the public connect it with the terrorists and as a result want to go to war instead of using reason and asking the president, where is the evidence? They don’t pay attention to the words, “imagine a terrorist attack” that were spoken by George W. Bush, they only focus on the false fear. Being blinded by faith and money are other aspects that draw us away from reason and logic.

Gore then goes on to talk about how our poor use of reason and logic has led to the downfall of our economy by our former president, George W. Bush. To get our nation to go to war, he performed some brainwashing tactics that to this day still have some Americans scratching their heads. We did a careful analysis of the American people about which argument would most likely persuade them to go to war, and the answer came out to be weapons of mass destruction. After the 9/11 attack, while giving speeches, Bush started to use the names “Saddam Hussein” and “Osama Bin Laden” in the same sentence so that the public started thinking of them to be the same person, or very closely related when in fact, they are very different people and from two completely different groups. The administration started to get away with things. They were making up their own laws and blackmailing or threatening people not to tell the truth. In a State of the Union address, Bush was called out on having a forged document in his hand, and yet, four years later nobody has yet to be punished for this. Al Gore claims that because of our naive and innocent state, we freely believed everything that was told to us by the Bush administration and that an easily fixed situation has grown to an alarming size with the declining state of our economy.

            The author attacks these issues smoothly. He goes from one way we don’t use logic to the other, but keeps the reader engaged and interested. Because of his journalistic background, his writing is professional and helps to create a strong base to build his argument upon. The book does however seem to be geared towards a older audience. He uses a lot of mature vocabulary and talks about issues as if the reader already knows the general background about them. He makes a lot of generalizations as well.

IV. Many people just don’t want to hear that they are being blind. They want to feel like they have made all the right decisions. Many feel that George Bush has made an excellent president. One man made a website of all the positive attributes relating to Bush as a way to get people to vote for him. He is against abortion, helping women, against stem cell research, opposed human cloning, and has taken a stance for abstinence only education. “President Bush is a man with clear pro-life values and he has taken every occasion during his presidency to implement public policy that values the dignity and worth of human life” (Ertelt).

My sources did conflict with the book because it showed feelings of Bush from another point of view. It brought out the good in Bush. However, this source wasn’t strong enough to overcome all of the negative things that were told about Bush in this book. I also found contradictions in some of the sources feelings towards Bush. They state that Bush is the right choice for a leader because he believes in life, such as not supporting abortions or stem cell research. However, they seem to have no problem with their president sending thousands of citizens to a pointless war to die.

V. In this book, it is clear that lack of initiative of the public is a problem. We focus on what celebrity wear, reality shows, what series has the most drama, and silly news stories. In doing this, we are blindly letting extremely negative issues occur. We look the other way when a man sends our people to war, but everyone is talking about who fathered Anna Nicole Smith’s daughter. We need to recognize that there is a problem and change it before it is too late!

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